



All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Visitor Economy

Chairs: Nigel Huddleston MP & Margaret Ritchie MP

Contact: appg@bha.org.uk

Date and Time: 31 October 2016, 17:00

Location: Room P, Portcullis House

Theme: Coastal Communities Inquiry

Present (Parliamentarians): Margaret Ritchie MP (Co-Chair), Nigel Huddleston MP (Co-Chair), Dr. Philippa Whitford MP, Scott Mann MP, Ian Liddell-Grainger MP

Non-Parliamentarians present: Vernon Hunte – British Hospitality Association (Secretariat), Louise Doyle – British Hospitality Association (Secretariat), Sara Williams - Campaign to Cut Tourism VAT, Hannah Lane - Campaign to Cut Tourism VAT, Chris Knutsen – Campaign to Cut Tourism VAT, Timothy Jenkins – Visit Britain, Sam Oakley – Visit England, Greg Thompson – assistant to Huw Merriman MP, George Morris-Seers – Media House

Introduction from Co-Chair Margaret Ritchie MP

Margaret Ritchie MP welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided a little context. Having previously focused on apprenticeships and skills, coastal communities had been identified as the next area of focus by the APPG. She explained that the aim of this meeting was to review the various themes highlighted in the written evidence and then decide what principal issues the APPG should receive oral evidence on.

Summary from Secretariat

Vernon Hunte informed the Group that there are many important themes arising from the evidence and that there appears to be a degree of cohesion between these. He explained how the MPs constituency perspectives can help the Group narrow down its focus to the most pertinent issues.

Summary of the themes present in the written evidence

Some of the themes arising from the written evidence included a lack of continuity in funding mechanisms, infrastructure issues and poor broadband and mobile coverage. Hannah Lane pointed out the submission by an SME in Beadnell, which highlighted that young people decided to move from the area because of the absence of further education and universities in the town and surrounding area.

Discussion of proposed themes – the issue of erosion

Margaret Ritchie MP started the discussion by highlighting the challenges her constituency and many others in the UK face from coastal erosion. There was broad agreement around the table that erosion should be considered by the Group in the inquiry.

Creating broad, umbrella themes

Nigel Huddleston MP suggested summarising the themes found in the summary into broader umbrella groups such as 'infrastructure' as it would be a shame to narrow down too much at the start and lose valuable evidence. He expressed his desire to consider suggestions raised in the written evidence, such as Coastal Development Zones.

Connectivity as a theme

Dr Philippa Whitford MP echoed Nigel Huddleston MP's point about creating broad themes and suggested the idea of 'connectivity'. She said that the lack of connectivity in coastal and rural areas partly explains the brain drain phenomenon, which also feeds into why rural Scotland relies on migrant workers. She explained how this link to migration illustrates how all these issues are surprisingly interconnected and that a lot of the matters that affect the coast also are pertinent to rural areas.

Coastal erosion and funding balances

Ian Liddell-Grainger MP contrasted Margaret Ritchie MP's earlier point with an example from his own constituency that highlighted how erosion and flooding has led to 'disaster tourism'. He also mentioned that on a recent trip to France, he saw how nuclear tourism is a growing phenomenon and suggested this may also be the case in his constituency once Hinkley Point C is built.

He also raised the issue that the coast and hinterland in his constituency compete for regional funding. Another issue constituents have raised in relation to applications for funding is the short timeframe for application.

Inshore fishing blue flag beaches and internet infrastructure

Scott Mann MP referenced a point raised in an earlier, separate meeting, that the inshore fishing fleet post-Brexit may become increasingly important to UK coasts. He reinforced his will to protect the Blue Flag beaches programme post-Brexit, which is so important to Cornwall. He noted that Cornwall also suffers from poor mobile/broadband infrastructure.

Summation

Margaret Ritchie MP summarised the discussion so far into four themes: education/training/apprenticeships, fiscal incentives, infrastructure and connectivity.

Dr Philippa Whitford MP suggested covering the issue of Brexit and tourism separately from this inquiry and that as training and education had already been covered in the APPG's previous inquiry, attention should be focused on other issues.

Nigel Huddleston MP mentioned that the CMS committee he sits on is currently looking at Brexit and tourism. The APPG could then consider topics that the CMS committee's "impact of Brexit on the creative industries, tourism and the digital single market inquiry" does not, or is unable to, cover in detail.

London-centric focus

Ian Liddell-Grainger MP said that European visitors from countries like Germany want to visit the London and the UK because it is currently cheaper due to the falling value of sterling. Nigel

Huddleston MP pointed out how the tourist focus on visiting London is one of the core problems facing the industry and that there is a need to encourage visitors to travel to other parts of the UK.

Barriers to destination promotion

Ian Liddell-Grainger MP responded by saying a contact at the Tower of London informed him that this organisation is not allowed to promote other attractions around Britain because of its charitable status. He questioned why this is the case

Nigel Huddleston MP mentioned the need to scale up the GREAT campaign, which has had considerable success already.

Scott Mann MP questioned whether the BBC has a specific role in destination promotion for areas outside of London. Nigel Huddleston MP conceded that TV has a huge role to play and highlighted the example of Downton Abbey, but that it may not be the BBC's responsibility specifically.

Visit Britain and Visit England

Timothy Jenkins and Simon Oakley reported that they have submitted evidence to both the CMS and EFRA committees about Visit Britain and Visit England.

Timothy Jenkins highlighted Visit Britain has a commercial partnership with the BBC and British Airways to inspire people to come to the UK and then book tickets for their visit. He iterated how a primary focus of Visit Britain was to encourage tourists to visit other parts of the UK and not just London.

Dr Philippa Whitford MP asked if Visit Britain and Visit England links with Visit Scotland. Timothy Jenkins said that the two organisations are separate but that they have a partnership of equality. He said that Visit Britain does run specific campaigns to encourage visits to countries like Scotland, highlighting the example of the #NessyTips campaign and Explore GB. He highlighted that Lord Thurso sits on the Visit Scotland board.

Concluding Remarks

Dr Philippa Whitford MP reiterated the how tourism is vital throughout the entire country. She highlighted that connectivity is a broad theme that would take time to organise and as such, the APPG should first focus on fiscal incentives.

Nigel Huddleston MP proposed covering business diversity and the sustainability of coastal business in the face of seasonality and other challenges. Philippa Whitford MP put forward the example of how difficult it is for rural Scottish producers to transport their products for a reasonable price, which hampers their business.

Margaret Ritchie MP said it will be good going forward to cover potential solutions to problems such as regenerating urban areas. It was suggested that the APPG should hear success stories such as Folkestone, and Dr Philippa Whitford MP mentioned the success of the seaweed industry in her constituency.

Lastly, Greg Thompson spoke on issues in Huw Merriman MP's constituency that include transport and encouraging young people to stay. Dr Philippa Whitford MP added that issues such as

broadband connectivity feed into why young people leave the coast, which illustrates that many of the issues discussed are interlinked.